



THE WRITTEN WORD

Reviewed by Rabbi Baruch Weiss
thewrittenword@yated.com

LIVING IN THE LAND

Firsthand Accounts from Bnei Torah and Their Families

BY YOEL BERMAN

The Written Word features reviews and synopses of newly-released English language seforim, books and biographies. Rabbi Baruch Weiss selects and reviews a recently published volume, sharing with Yated readers information about its content and the background of its author. Suggestions may be submitted by authors, publishers and distributors to thewrittenword@yated.com.

Picking up and moving to Eretz Yisroel is not a simple matter for anyone. School, job, and housing infrastructures in Eretz Yisroel are different than in North America. The bureaucracy, culture, language, and mannerisms of Israeli society bewildered and frustrated many Americans who were considering the move. The social element of being the only English-speaking family in an entire apartment complex was also taxing on many families. Repeatedly stymied, unable to fit in and navigate the different systems, many families were discouraged to the point where they gave up and moved back to America.

Reb Yoel Berman, a native Californian who has been living in Eretz Yisroel for over a decade, argues in his newly published book *Living in the Land* that many of the aforementioned concerns are no longer applicable. What if one could move to Eretz Yisroel and have the process streamlined for him and his family? What if he had a personal guide to help him find a neighborhood, job, school-system, and yeshiva? What if he could live in a community in Eretz Yisroel in which he would not be viewed as an outsider?

Instead of relying solely on his knowledge and expertise on the subject - expertise which he, in fact, possesses - Rabbi Berman chose to make his case in a unique and creative way. Instead of authoring the book himself, he sought out American

families who have successfully made living in Eretz Yisroel work for them. Drawing on their own experiences, the writers explain how they were able to avoid certain pitfalls and make their move a success. The authors convey a deep sense of fulfillment and gratitude for the opportunity to live in Eretz Yisroel and explain how it has changed their entire outlook on life.

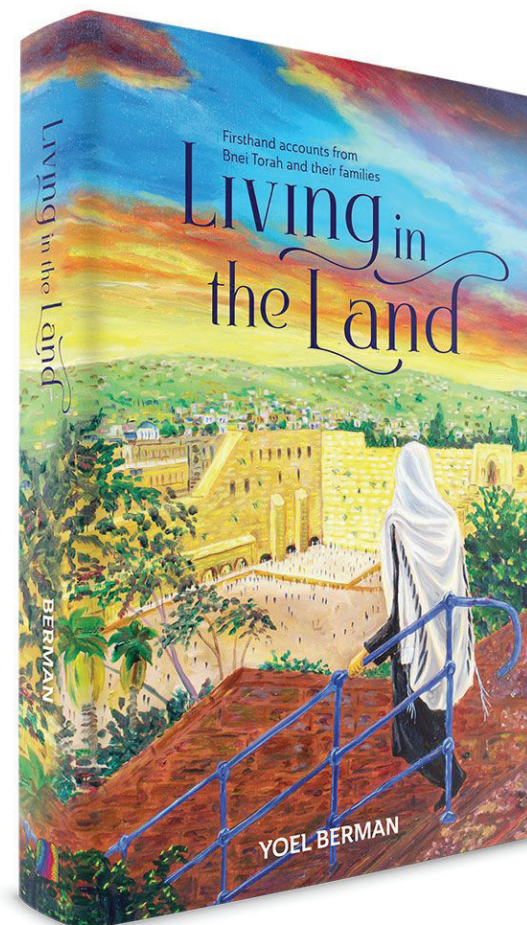
The essays do not sugar-coat the experience, claiming that there are no longer any challenges. The writers make it clear that there is an acclimation process which must be endured and that there are adjustments to one's lifestyle that must be made. They even state that moving to Eretz Yisroel is not for everyone. Depending on one's age, the ages of one's children, one's unique skill set and culture, the reader will still have much to consider. At the same time, the reader will be introduced to realities and opportunities that, until recently, were not widely known or easily accessible.

With organizations like Nefesh B'nefesh and consultants like Rabbi Berman becoming more adept at assisting Americans settle in Eretz Yisroel, much of the headache of dealing with Israeli bureaucracy has been eliminated. With the advent of online workplaces, many Americans can keep their American-based jobs while living in Eretz Yisroel. Working American hours while living in Eretz Yisroel enables many people to devote a large

part of their days to Torah study. With the proliferation of American communities in places like Ramat Beit Shemesh, Netanya, Raanana, and Rechovot, the American no longer needs to feel like an outsider. In fact, in recent years, schools have been opened that cater to the American-Israeli demographic.

Another interesting dimension of the book is that, as the essays are written by different people, the perspectives and advice often diverge from one essay to the next. While some writers advocate complete immersion in Israeli society, others maintain that it's fine to remain American and not try to force something on yourself and your children. While some of the writers advise settling in predominantly English-speaking communities, others say that they don't mind living among Hebrew speakers. While some of the writers settled in remote and more rural communities, others made a point of settling in one of the country's urban centers.

While the book presents varying opinions and outlooks, there is a prevailing pride that runs through almost every essay. Each writer expresses a deep connection to Eretz Yisroel - one that was often only discovered after



the writer made the move. *Living in the Land* provides food for thought and fodder for conversation.

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Rabbi Nachum Scheiner

מוהל מומחה

CELL: **845-499-6354**

